

NSC BRIEFING

12 July 1955

Vietnam

- I. 20 July, the date identified with the controversial pre-election negotiations in Vietnam, falls on the third day of the Geneva talks. It is now obvious that no pre-election consultations will get under way on that date, and this may cause a major stir.
- II. Geneva agreement states that such talks shall take place "from 20 July 1955 onward."
- III. Viet Minh interpret this as talks should start immediately on that date and during past month have been increasingly insistent that this provision be observed.
 - A. Two high Viet Minh officials and Soviet ambassador, [redacted] have hinted at "violent action" in south if consultations were delayed.
 - B. Pamphlets, apparently produced by the Communists, turned up in Saigon last week calling for demonstrations against the Dien regime and "American election saboteurs," but were completely ignored.
- IV. Dien extremely reluctant to talk with Viet Minh, arguing:
 - A. Vietnam not bound by Geneva agreements it did not sign.
 - B. Talks cannot begin while relations with French not satisfactorily settled.
 - C. His government cannot make important commitments without approval of a national assembly, yet to be elected, September at earliest.
 - D. Communists will not permit "truly free" elections.
 - E. A declaration for consultations would be regarded as

callout. "alarm [redacted]

Vietnamese people.

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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- F. Dien is expected to make some statement prior to Summit conference, and probably will come out in favor of unification through democratic elections, but not in accordance with Geneva accords and with no date specified.
- V. French legal experts agree with Communists that talks ~~must~~ begin on 20th. DED
- A. Have indicated, however, that they will not sit in for South Vietnam, although Communists hold them responsible for carrying out Geneva agreements. 25X1
- VI. British also favor talks and are urging Dien not to disavow Geneva.
- A. Hold that talks are necessary so South Vietnam can prove to the world that Viet Minh would not agree to free elections.
- B. Also agree with French that matter is not worth major crisis.
- VII. Ho Chi Minh is presently lining up Soviet and Chinese Communist support for Viet Minh position.
- A. Sino-Viet Minh communique signed in Peiping on eve of Ho's departure for Moscow laid heavy emphasis on matter of 20 July consultation.
- B. Chinese Communists subsequently equated Vietnam elections with "liberation" of Formosa in relative importance.
- C. Ho now being received by top Soviet leaders in Moscow and Soviet-Viet Minh communique may be issued before or during summit conference. The Soviet leaders may broach the subject of elections at Geneva in the belief that they can bring pressure on the United States through the British and the French.

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- D. Bulgasin-Nehru statement voiced concern over Indochina situation and placed Moscow and New Delhi on record in favor of strict implementation of Geneva Pact.

Cambodia

- I. The Chou-He joint communique also attacked our military aid agreement with Cambodia. Communists are trying to make major issue out of this.
- II. Indian and Polish members of ICC have informally concluded that certain passages of MDAP violate Geneva accords.
 - A. Essentially they question Cambodia's declaration of neutrality and promise not to seek foreign military aid except for defense.* See notes.
 - B. Commission, however, not likely to make formal ruling until Indian chairman receives instructions from Nehru who has just returned to Delhi.
 - C. While Indians may settle for clarifying statements emphasizing defensive nature of pact, indications are that Nehru--who has been worked over by Chou En-lai--is unfavorably disposed to it.

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III. Cambodian officials have given assurances that they will not back down.

A. These officials also assert that in the event of unfavorable ruling, government would hold a referendum and anticipated popular demand for United States aid would be considered to override ICC objections.

B. Prince Sihanouk, still the most powerful political leader in Cambodia, has taken same position.

IV. Attitude of Cambodians likely to have moderating factor on Indians who regard Cambodia to lie within their sphere of influence.

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Laos

I. Pathet Lao attack on Muong Peun in northern Laos on 3 July was most recent and largest in scale of series of Communist-inspired dashes since 1954 cease fire.

A. Latest reports indicate that royal forces have recaptured lost ground and that fighting has subsided.

B. Approximately 3,000 men or one-half of Pathet Lao forces are estimated to have been in general area of Muong Peun, although only a portion are involved.

II. Attack undoubtedly part of campaign to force ultimate withdrawal of royal forces from disputed provinces and to back up exorbitant demands put forward during negotiations in Vientiane.

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- A. Immediate result of attack was suspension of talks by government.
 - B. Prime Minister, who has bent over backward to be conciliatory to Pathet Lao and to please Indians, issued strong statement denouncing Pathet Lao breach of Geneva agreement and Viet Minh for aiding aggressors.
 - C. Lao government, however, has agreed to ICC proposals for ceasefire and indicates willingness to appoint senior officers to work with Pathet Lao representatives to implement agreement.
 - D. Another instance of Prime Minister talking tough without altering policy of "appeasement and conciliation" as he himself described it.
- III. Situation remains explosive as both sides have been building up military strength in Muong Poun area for several months.
- A. At present the opposing forces appear to be about evenly matched. Government garrison at Muong Poun of 1800, has been reinforced by at least part of a parachute battalion (several hundred men), and is believed to have five power edge over more numerous Pathet Lao forces.
 - B. Pathet Lao, however---aided by Viet Minh material and personnel---is gradually increasing its military capabilities.

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